

Golden Liberty lifts her torch to rare sellout

By Roger Boye

In just three months, the United States Mint sold all 500,000 Statue of Liberty gold coins it is permitted to make under federal law.

The sellout—the first since commemorative coin production began in 1982 after a 28-year hiatus—has forced bureaucrats to return thousands of gold-coin orders to would-be buyers. Still, Uncle Sam probably will continue to offer Statue of Liberty silver dollars and copper-nickel half dollars until the coinage program ends late this year. There are much higher mintage limits for those two items [10 million and 25 million, respectively].

Experts say that the 1986-dated statue gold coins may increase in value as they are traded among collectors, thanks to the demand. When sales began in early November, the government charged \$170 for a statue gold piece; by mid-February—after the sellout was announced—that proof coin fetched \$300 or more on the hobby market.

Later this month, officials will begin to consign the two remaining statue coin types to thousands of banks and retailers for over-the-counter sales [a proof silver dollar will cost \$24 and a half dollar, \$7.50]. A national advertising campaign is scheduled to begin in April.

Incidentally, some investors predict that neither of the two remaining pieces will have much market potential because of the much greater supply.

● Some 105 rare-coin dealers from around the world will be selling their wares later this week at the Chicago International Coin Fair, one of the city's largest annual shows.

Those pros will set up shop in Columbus Hall at the Hyatt Regency Hotel, 151 E. Wacker Dr., from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Friday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. next Sunday.

Fair organizers will conduct a special program for persons under 18 that will include a for-youth-only auction and a talk by Florence M. Schook, president of the American Numismatic Association. The session begins at 11 a.m. Saturday in the Columbus A-B Room; juniors attending will receive door prizes.

The Rare Coin Company of America in Chicago—the show's sponsor—will conduct an auction beginning at 7 p.m. Friday. Admission to all activities is free and visitors are invited to attend any club meeting.